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DON'T LET THE FLU RUIN YOUR HOLIDAYS

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The 2019 flu season has gotten off to a fast start across the country and here in the Tampa Bay area. Florida is already seeing regional flu activity, and the season's peak of late December through February has yet to come.

The Florida Department of Health urges all Floridians older than six months who have not yet received their vaccination to do so as soon as possible. With the busy holiday season now under way, vaccination

ensures protection when many gather for celebrations and family events.

While taking precautions such as proper handwashing and sanitizing frequently-handled surfaces can help reduce the likelihood you will contract the flu, the safest and most effective way to avoid this serious illness is by getting the seasonal flu vaccine. Flu strains change from year to year so a new vaccine is needed at the start of each season. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for your body to develop protection against the flu.

The flu is the deadliest infectious disease in the United States. Each year, nearly 35,000 people die of the flu or of its many complications, such as pneumonia.

No, you cannot catch the flu from the flu shot. The viruses used to make the vaccine are incapable of causing the illness. While certain people may feel tired and achy the day after the shot, that is a normal response as the immune system develops antibodies. Those symptoms pale in comparison to the high fever, body aches and other symptoms a full-blown case of the flu can bring.

Each of the Tampa Bay area county health departments and most pharmacies and primary care physician offices offer flu shots. For information about the flu and to find other locations to get the seasonal vaccine, go to www.FluFreeFlorida.com or call your county's health office at:

- Citrus (352) 527-0068
- Hardee (863) 773-4161
- Hernando (353) 540-6800 (Ages 17 and under only)
- Highlands (863) 386-6040
- Hillsborough (813) 307-8000

- Manatee (941) 748-0747
- Pasco (727) 619-0300
- Pinellas (727) 824-6900
- Polk (863) 519-7900
- Sarasota (941) 861-2900

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About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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